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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 USUN NEW YORK 001717

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: AMB WOLFF AND UN U/SYG GAMBARI DISCUSS ARAB LEAGUE  
PROPOSAL FOR MEPP MINISTERIAL

Classified By: Amb. John Bolton. E.O. 12958. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: DPR Amb Wolff advised UN U/SYG Ibrahim Gambari August 31 that the USG is highly skeptical about a Security Council ministerial on the peace process at this time. Amb Wolff noted, moreover, that since the Arab League has been unable to explain the purpose of the meeting, has failed to provide for Israeli involvement, and has bypassed the Quartet and Roadmap, we currently oppose the Arab League initiative. Gambari said he had heard similar concerns from the other members of the P5, and explained he continued to engage with the Arab League to "probe for answers." Acknowledging that time is limited, Gambari asked the USG "to leave room to be persuaded." End Summary.

UN and Arab League

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¶2. (C) U/SGY for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari told Amb Wolff August 31 that he has been consulting with the P5 on the Arab League proposal to hold a Security Council ministerial on the Middle East peace process during the General Debate of the UN General Assembly, when ministers travel to New York. Gambari recalled that he had circulated a nonpaper on the proposal prepared by the Arab League to P5 Ambassadors on August 22. Since that time, he had received a note verbale reiterating the request for a Security Council ministerial from the Egyptian Permanent Representative (e-mailed to NEA). He also shared a draft op-ed by AL SYG Amre Moussa.

¶3. (C) Gambari said he had solicited P5 views on the following questions: do you support the proposed ministerial meeting; do you support the international conference proposed in the nonpaper; what is your view of the continuing role and relevance of the Quartet; what is your view of the future of the Roadmap; what is the proper role of the Security Council in the Middle East Peace Process. Gambari said the other members of the P5 had underscored the ongoing need for the Quartet, and their objection to Moussa's assertion that "the Quartet is dead." While noting the Roadmap is behind schedule, they had also endorsed its continuing relevance. He said Russia and China had been the most supportive of the ministerial and conference, but even they had said those meetings needed to be properly prepared. Gambari reported the general view that the Security Council could play a helpful role of encouragement or catalyst to the peace process, but that the Council should not replace the Quartet.

¶4. (C) Gambari's special assistant for Middle Eastern affairs, Steven Siquiera, reported that he had asked the Arab League "what's your Israel strategy" but received no reply. Gambari explained that the Arab League maintained the purpose of the ministerial is to galvanize the parties to the conflict to carry out their commitments and to address the

"core" problem in the region.

USG Views

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¶5. (C) Amb Wolff advised Gambari that the USG has been waiting for clarification from the Arab League. Regrettably, the AL had failed to respond to questions posed by the USG, other Security Council members, and indeed the UN. The Arab League had not articulated the objective of the meeting, other than to provide a forum for statements. The AL had not shared any proposal regarding Israeli engagement. While Moussa had apparently ceased publicly declaring that the Roadmap is dead, the Arab League proposal did not appear to recognize a continuing role for the Quartet and the Roadmap. Amb Wolff reported that earlier in the day he had met the Algerian charge who admitted he had no idea at this point what the Arab League intended to achieve.

¶6. (C) Turning to the environment in the UN, Amb Wolff described for Gambari his experience with recent statements on the Middle East by leading members of the NAM, OIC, and the AL in General Assembly fora. Recalling that the Arab League had stated its wish for a "positive" tone during the proposed ministerial, Amb Wolff reported he had seen no evidence of a change in rhetoric. Rather, these delegations continued making statements that are heated and unbalanced. This experience raised doubts about the assertion that a Security Council ministerial would mark a break from business as usual. For all these reasons, Amb Wolff concluded, the USG remained skeptical in general about a meeting and consequently, if asked today to respond, we would oppose it. We are reluctant to commit our Secretary of State to an effort that could lead to a counterproductive outcome.

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¶7. (C) Gambari thanked Amb Wolff for USG input, and said the UN and other P5 members shared U.S. concerns. He said he would continue to engage with the UN to "probe for answers," and asked the United States to "leave room to be persuaded." But he admitted that the September 21 proposed date for the ministerial left little time to resolve the outstanding questions.

BOLTON